Link Starbureiy Creator of Egglepple Talks Math, Animation, Creativity and Madness

Written by Robin Wilding NOVEMBER 2, 2011

If anyone ever debates the complexity and diversity of the animation world, your argument can be Link Starbureiy. Link's work is an odd combination of math, animation, creativity and madness—his work literally lying somewhere between lunacy and genius (as brilliance so often does).

Most popularly known for Egglepple, a method of computational mathematics that uses animation to visualize its solutions. The theory, created in 1991, is defined by the Urban Dictionary as "a term coined by Link Starbureiy to mean abstract or mathematical fiber. He used egglepple to solve problems in string theory." How an abstract mathematical fiber made it into the Urban Dictionary we have no idea. If you are still following along with us, Link's work is built upon krayon dictionaries and is used to render mutating algorithms—in a cool, visual and animated way.

Link's toys portfolio explores The Origamic Symphony in musical simulacrum to form a unique technical discipline called Stewart.

We were lucky enough to steal some time from Link to ask him about his super-unique area of animation:

What is your firm's focus within animation and what led your firm to have such a focus?

Broadly, my career is in two theaters. The portfolio (Egglepple) is essentially a fun teaching aid, and the trust (UUe + MAGICampaign) is a standards body. Technically, I work on something called *stew choreography* (stewart). In math-speak, a *stew* is a twelve-genus codec that is dependent upon a product of flageolet pencils.

When I was a teenager, a buddy of mine suggested that I read a book called 'Hyperspace' by Michio Kaku, which covered quantum physics, among other stuff. What I took away from the book was that there was this amazing theory people were working on that they didn't fully understand. The author posed a challenge ("No one is smart enough to solve the field theory of strings..."), and I was hooked.

Fill in the blank: The future of animation is _____.

Stewart (stew choreography), I hope.

What are the best and worst aspects about working in the animation field?

Animation is completely non-linear, so the fact that one can literally create anything they want is the best part of the job. The only drawback, in my opinion, is the amount of time it takes to render. The natural course of computing will lend itself to faster processors and real-time rasterization, which is pretty neat.

Among your firm's achievements, which one(s) are you the most proud of?

The Origamic Symphony, Stewart's Opera, and my dear friend Joey Koala. :)

What skills/qualities does your firm seek out when hiring new employees?

A person who can do what I do will have a strong talent for mathematics and music. You really have to be cognitively open and plastic, since we're inventing it as we go along. "Strong talent for mathematics" just means that you understand computing/computation on a source level. I use a suite of both 2D and 3D graphics programs for visualization, so I'm in the same boat as everyone else in that regard. Music is practically good for timing; you have to know how to posit your character within a dynamic scene.

What particular schools, if any, does your firm recruit new hires from? If none, where do you recruit new hires?

I'm biased. I did all my research stuff at The Ohio State University, so I'm loyal to the 'Campus in Columbus'. Rightfully so, because they have some really great programs, labs, and institutes, namely ACCAD and HCGL. Anyone with that training gets noticed by me (and many others, I'm sure), right off-the-bat!

What advice would you give to aspiring animators?

Success in life comes from adhering to a string of quotes of wisdom, thus I am really not in a position to advise, *per se*. Corny Cole said to "draw every day". This is true. We can extend that to mean "work on whatever it is you do to improve your skills(et) every day". I don't think that anything gets done without deadlines and/or passion, though. ;)

What were your most challenging projects, and why?

It took me eight years (1998 - 2006) to get to a point where I was able to incorporate the basics of frame

interpolation (*i.e.*, animation) into the Egp Kernel. So much time spent getting to that point was probably due to outside obstacles, but it was a 'Eureka!' moment when it happened.

What kind of education did it take to get you where you are today?

Hmm.. Typically, the best education is watching the masters at work (which is supposed to be why we go to school). In my case, though, since I am an autodidact, my humble answer is simply trying new things; coming up with a bunch of potentials, and picking from the best of those potentials. I had to invent a lot of the makeup of the field on my own, and it shows.

What animation software packages does your firm prefer to use? Which one would you recommend to beginners?

To be honest, I love *Google Sketchup* for its simplicity, but don't like its out-of-the-box limitations. Conversely, *Blender* is a complete package, but is notorious for its learning curve. On the brush side, I prefer *Corel Painter*, but find myself using *GIMP* more often because it has 'layers', which is a feature conducive to animating. Also, don't sleep on *Microsoft Office* (probably the greatest software package on the market to-date). It's heavily under-utilized in the graphics fields because of the stigma of 'document creation', but Excel and PowerPoint can deliver some stunning experiences.

Could you share with us your best story about working in the animation industry.

For me, personally, satisfaction comes from others enjoying what it is that I do. I want to be remembered as the guy who did a good job.

Do you think that there is an increasing or decreasing demand for animators overall? Why?

Increasing. The world is able to dream more now than at any other point in time (destined to always be true). I think science and technology has only given art a license to do what it does, which is take people to places they haven't been before. Society is starting to come to grips with the notion of once disparately well-defined crafts, namely art/science/technology, as just one thing: animation. Walt Disney said it best when he conjectured that animation lets us do anything we may wish, as long as we figure out certain things. Nowadays - and I believe well into future, you'll start to see firms of all types with a resident animation department, because it just makes so much sense to harvest that creativity.

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